

---

# INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CIA/RR GM 65-2  
March 1965

## *INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF INDOCHINA*



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

WARNING

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

---

### Interior Boundaries

Approved For Release 2002/05/09 : CIA-RDP84-00825R000100140001-0

### Exterior Boundaries

North Vietnamese maps published in 1964 differ markedly from US and French Government maps in their delineation of five sectors of the Vietnam - Laos boundary (see Map 51019).<sup>6</sup> Two discrepancies are the result of North Vietnamese reliance upon older, inaccurate French map sources. One is the location of the border between the sectors of Laos and Vietnam to the west of the trijunction of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to about 165N and (2) the sector from about 20°00'N to 20°55'N. A third discrepancy involves a triangular area at about 20°55'N, 103°55'E, for which no cartographic or other logical explanation is apparent.

The remaining two areas of difference in boundary alignment appear to be based on cartographic misrepresentations by North Vietnam, possibly as a basis for claiming land that now belongs to Laos. One of these areas is indicated by Route 7 where it crosses the North Vietnam - Laos frontier. The area is bounded by the border 6 to 7 miles west of its position on French and US Government maps.

Cambodia-South Vietnam Boundary

Much of the boundary between Cambodia and South Vietnam is in dispute. The land sector was delimited by various French administrative actions beginning in the latter part of the 19th century. Although there is evidence that the southern segment (Cochin China) was demarcated in the 1870's, most of the markers apparently have been destroyed through either natural causes or deliberate actions of South Vietnam or Cambodia. A water boundary, in the sense of an agreed line dividing the various offshore islands, does not exist. Instead, Cambodia and South Vietnam claim various islands, and in places, their claims conflict.

[illegible][illegible]

**Laos-Cambodia Boundary**

The Laos - Cambodia boundary was delimited by various French declarations of protection and by internal administrative actions of the former French Indochinese Government rather than by the usual international agreements.

No demarcation has been effected, but the boundary segment along the Mekong River follows the Tonle Sap and is technically not considered demarcated.

The boundary is not a dispute between Laos and Cambodia concerning this boundary. Representation of the boundary on North Vietnamese-produced maps, however, differs from that on current official US and French maps, presumably because of the French map.

The first definition of the boundary was contained in the 1893 treaty between France and the Kingdom of Siam, by which France forced expanding Siam to give up all territory east of the Mekong River. As a result of this agreement, the former Cambodian province of Stung Treng (part of which now comprises the Cambodian provinces of Stung Treng and Ratanak) became part of French Indochina. It retained this status until December 1904, when it was divided between Cambodia and ANAM (now North Vietnam) by French administrative decree. In 1904 Siam ceded to Cambodia the territory on the right bank of the Mekong, which had belonged to Cambodia in the 18th century, and this territory was the southeastern part of Laos. It was the French colony of Laos, which the French emperor later defined the Laos - Cambodia boundary by administrative action after 1904.

Vietnam Demarcation Line

The Vietnam Demarcation Line is not an international boundary. It is a provisional line approximately 17 miles long that implements the partition effected by the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities signed at Geneva on 20 July 1954. This agreement brought an end to hostilities between the French Union-Vietnamese Forces and forces of the Viet Minh. The line follows the course of the Song Ben Hai from its mouth to the village of So Hoi Su and then extends due west to the Vietnam - Laos boundary (see Map 11000).

A seaward extension of the Demarcation Line is provided for by Article 1 of the 1954 agreement, which provides that "The provisional military demarcation line between the two final regrouping zones is extended into the territorial waters by a line perpendicular to the general line of the coast of North Vietnam and South Vietnam at their intersection. In their interpretation of the extent of territorial waters, North Vietnam defines the width of its territorial waters as 12 nautical miles, whereas South Vietnam defines the width of its territorial waters as 20 nautical miles."

A map titled "DEMILITARIZED ZONE AREA" showing the border between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The map includes labels for "NORTH VIETNAM", "SOUTH VIETNAM", and "DEMILITARIZED ZONE". It also shows the location of "Vinh City" and "Hue City". A legend indicates symbols for "Demilitarized Zone Boundary" and "Provisional Military Demarcation Line, 1968".

SECRET

The boundary, 796.4 miles in length, for the most part follows crests of ridges and hills in rugged, remote areas that are sparsely populated by tribal peoples. Rivers and streams form the frontier for 218.4 miles, or about 27 percent of the total length. At least 385 pillars, approximately 1 pillar every 2 miles, demarcate the boundary.

The alignment of the boundary is shown correctly on three map series published by the Service Géographique de l'Indochine: the Carte de l'Indochine 1:100,000, Indochine -- Carte de la Frontière du Nord-Ouest at 1:100,000, and Indochine -- Carte de la Frontière Nord-Est, also at 1:100,000. Chinese maps of the area show the first two series.

The boundary measures 265.8 miles and is delimited by drainage divides the Yunnan Plateau region of China and northern Laos. It extends through a mountainous terrain, which is sparsely settled by tribal minorities. Only pillars are used to demarcate its entire length.

Laos-Burma Boundary

The Laos - Burma boundary was delimited in 1896 by an agreement between France and Great Britain. Because it follows the thalweg of a river, the boundary is regarded as demarcated. It is not in dispute.

French and British maps agree in their representation of the boundary; sheets of the British 1-inch (1:63,360) series, Burma - Southern Siam State show it in the greatest detail. The Army Map Service Series U542 at 1:250,000 is accurate within the limitations of its smaller scale.

The boundary extends for a distance of about 1,090 miles from its intersection with the Burmese boundary in the north to its intersection with the Cambodian boundary in the south. From the trijunction of Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia the boundary follows the channel of the Mekong River for 39 miles.

Over the next 361 miles the boundary is defined, where no islands exist by the salving of the Mekong River or, where there are islands, by the "line" closest to the Thai shore. Since seasonal variation in the level of the Mekong River is great, at times of low water many of the islands become attached or nearly attached to the Thai shore. The convention that delimited this segment of the boundary used the criterion of separation from shore at the highest water level. Thus, all islands in the sector belong to Laos.

Approximately 5 miles east of the confluence of the Mekong River with Mae Nam Mun the boundary leaves the former river and follows the drainage divide between the two rivers for a distance of 218 miles until it meets the Cambodian boundary at the site of the Fresh Chamdot. Thus, the Province of the Mekong and the western portion of Attapeu Province, in the extreme southwestern part of Laos, like Sayaboury Province, are separated from the remainder of Laos by the Mekong River, and in these areas the boundary between Thailand is a land boundary. The situation originated in the agreements

1893 and 1902 between Siam and France. In the 1893 agreement Siam renounced rights to the territories on the left bank of the Mekong River as well as all islands in the river. In the 1902 agreement Siam agreed to leave the territory that now comprises Sakayaburi Province in southwestern Laos as well as the territory in northeastern Laos that now comprises Champasak Province under French administration. In 1941 Japan forced France to return the Siam territories west of the Mekong River to Thailand, but the 1946 Washington Accord between France and Thailand restored the boundary established by the 1902 Convention.

The two land segments of the boundary are shown on the 11-sheet map at 1:200,000 entitled Commission de Délimitation Entre l'Indo-Chine et le Laos published in 1907. For the Mekong River boundary segment, sheets of the la Frontière Franco-Siamoise du Mékong 1/25,000, by the Haute Commission Franco-Siamoise de Délimitation du Mékong, 1901, show a boundary alignment that conforms with the agreements between Siam and Indochina.

Cambodia-Thailand Boundary

The boundary between Cambodia and Thailand was delimited by a series of agreements between France and Thailand during the period when Cambodia was a French colony. Much controversy over the boundary is generated. No disputes of precise boundary alignment have been raised by either country since the 1954 Judgment of the ICJ acknowledging Cambodian sovereignty over the French Virapne area (see No 10187). Thailand, however, has claimed that Thailand's use of international convention and Thailand's participation in the 1954 Judgment and the ICJ decision of 1962. Thailand, while willing to accept a status quo on the de facto basis, has refused to accept it by means of reference to the ICJ decision, concerning which it continues to maintain reservations.

The boundary extends from its intersection with the Laotian boundary the Col de French Chamber approximately 500 miles westward and then south to the Gulf of Siam. For most of its length it is aligned along drainage divides, including the long east-west sector of the Irian division and the Sangre de Cristo segment, as well as the 105-mi. segment of the drainage divide of the Chaco de San Andres and their extension northwest from the Gulf of Siam. Between these two segments, the boundary follows various ridges and mountain lines.

Of the treaties between France and Thailand that define the Cambodia-Thailand boundary, those of 1904 and 1907 are most important. The 1904 convention between France and Siam delimited the segment of the boundary all the Dangrek escarpment east of 104°E. The 1907 agreement delimited the remainder of the border, from 104°E westward along the Dangrek escarpment then southward to the Gulf of Siam. Only the north-south segment extended to the gulf is demarcated.

The boundary alignment is shown correctly on seven maps at 1:200,000 compiled by the delimitation commissions of 1904 and 1907. Except for minor changes, the most recently compiled sheets of the series *Carte de Chine* 1:100,000, published by the Service Géographique de l'Indochine, show a boundary alignment identical to that of the commission maps.

SECRET

Approved For Release 2002/05/09 : CIA-RDP84-00825R000100140001-0

SECRET

# INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES OF INDOCHINA

Active or potential disagreement exists on the alignment of several of the international boundaries of former Indochina. Boundary positions North Vietnamese maps, for example, depict the North Vietnam - Laos boundary differently from official US and French maps. Similarly, established boundary maps transmitted to the United States by Cambodia indicate important differences between the official Cambodian and South Vietnamese versions of their mutual boundary. This monograph constitutes a report on the status of all boundaries in Indochina, with special attention to their historical origin and the points of current instability.

## Background

Indochina has eight international boundaries (counting the landless boundary with North Vietnam and South Vietnam as a single boundary). In addition to the precolonial military demarcation line between North Vietnam and South Vietnam, no active dispute exists for the entire boundary of Indochina -- those with China, Burma, and Thailand -- which for most of their extent are demarcated.<sup>1</sup> Thailand accepts its boundary with Cambodia, <sup>2</sup> but only on a de facto basis and maintains a rather vague reservation concerning the 1962 International Court of Justice (ICJ) nonrecognition of Cambodian sovereignty over the French Village Temple site on the border. The interior boundaries -- those between the component states of former Indochina -- are generally unmarked and consequently amenable to dispute. The potential for trouble is illustrated by Cambodia's repeated protests against attacks on Cambodian border villages by Laos, Vietnam or armed forces. Another source of trouble between Cambodia and South Vietnam is the dispute that has persisted for the last decade as to the ownership of islands in the Gulf of Thailand. Most recently, North Vietnam's cartographic claims to the landless area west of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) appear to provide the basis for its contention that Laosian aircraft are bombing "North Vietnamese" towns in that area.

All of the boundaries and the conflicting national attitudes toward them have important roots in Indochina's colonial history. As shown on Figure 1, Indochina in the late 19th century comprised the deterministic Cambodian (Khmer) Kingdom, Laos, the remnants of the Kingdom of Siam, and the separate Kingdoms of Siam and North China -- the former Siam Kingdom (Kingdom of Siam), known to the Chinese as Siam, "the pacified south"). During the 17th century, when walls that for 150 years separated the Kingdom of Siam from the Kingdom of Siam were built across the Gulf of Thailand. Most recently, North Vietnam's cartographic claims to the landless area west of the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) appear to provide the basis for its contention that Laosian aircraft are bombing "North Vietnamese" towns in that area.

<sup>1</sup> A demarcated boundary is one that has been marked physically on the ground with official pillars or other devices. A boundary established by a set line, such as the Chinese (line of the deepest and widest channel), in or along a water body also may be regarded as unmarked.



Figure 1. Indochina, 1960



Figure 2. Indochina, 1960



Figure 3. Indochina, 1960



Figure 4. Indochina, 1960

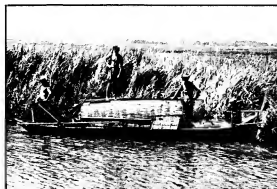


Figure 5. Aerial view of landscape area

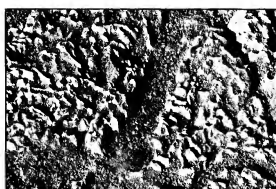


Figure 6. Aerial view of landscape area

SECRET

By the beginning of the 19th century the Annamite empire had reunited Siam and Cambodia into a single country that extended into the Mekong Delta, while the Chao Phraya had been forced to withdraw. In the latter part of the 19th century, France, whose interest in Indochina dated from the arrival of French missionaries in the early 17th century, obtained a trail to the penetration of Christian converts by the Annamite government. The penetration of Christianity, and France finally defeated Siam by military force. Siam, under the terms of the Bangkok Treaty, then ceded the entire Indochina (see Figure 2) and transferred a revenue payment to the French in return for the French back to French troops. Between 1893 and 1907 France added the following three areas to French Indochina: (a) all territory on the left bank of the Mekong River and islands in the river; (b) all territory on the right bank of the Mekong River; and (c) all territory on the right bank of the Mekong River and islands in the river. In 1907, the French Indochina provinces of Angkor and Battambang, which France had relinquished to Siam in 1893.

The other exterior boundaries of Indochina were settled during the period 1887-96. Between 1887 and 1893 China agreed to the delimitation<sup>3</sup> and demarcation of what are now the North Vietnam - China boundary and the Laos - China boundary. In 1896 Great Britain and France agreed to use the Mekong River as the border between Laos and Burma.

In the case of the 19th century, France had thus created a colonial entity consisting of Siam, Annam, Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos (see Figure 2). Except for minor boundary changes between these components that were largely the result of French administrative actions, this was the Indochina that was conquered by Japan in 1941.

The Japanese Government, in late 1940, encouraged Thailand to attack Indochina and Siam. In March 1941, as a result of a dispute that resulted in Thailand recognizing territory from Laos and Cambodia (see Figure 4). In 1941 these territories were returned to Laos and Cambodia by the Washington Agreement between France and Laos. No change in Indochina's exterior boundaries have been made since this agreement, other than the 1962 ICJ decision on the site of the French Village Temple.

Summary analyses of both the interior and exterior boundaries of Indochina are given on the reverse side of this monograph.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The source of a river are designated as right or left as one flows downstream.  
<sup>2</sup> A detailed boundary is one whose alignment has been agreed upon and described in a treaty or other formal document. The fact that a boundary is delimited does not mean that it is demarcated or that it can even be located on the ground with precision.  
<sup>3</sup> More detailed description of the boundaries of the individual countries treated here may be found in the International Boundary Study series prepared by the Office of the Geographer, Department of State.

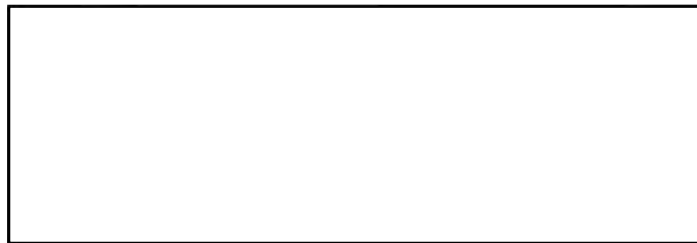
SECRET

SECRET

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

STAT



1-E-4846

Hdg.

to  
= 5 Nov 70

CIA/RR GM 65-2  
March 1965

"International Policies of  
Indochina"

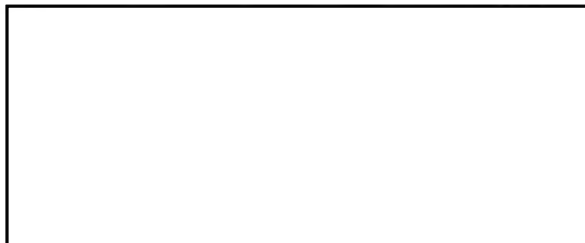
Next 7 Page(s) In Document Exempt

1 April 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: St/P/C

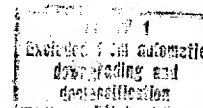
SUBJECT: Classification and Control of Source Materials -  
CIA/RR CM 65-2, International Boundaries of  
Indochina, dated April 1965

I certify that source materials used in CIA/RR CM 65-2,  
International Boundaries of Indochina, dated April 1965, were  
classified no higher than SECRET and were not restricted by  
dissemination controls.



25X1

SECRET



Next 29 Page(s) In Document Exempt